

Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, eds. *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*.

Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 42. Leiden: Brill, 2013. ix + 406 pp. \$218. ISBN: 978-90-04-22189-5.

This volume offers a crucial introduction to the works of Marguerite de Navarre, accessible to a more general audience of early modern scholars without stinting on the scholarly depth and interpretive sophistication of studies more limited in scope. All of the essays provide valuable insight into the full range of Marguerite's work, from the perspective of her religious engagements and views. This perspective is everywhere placed in the broader historical contexts, particularly those of intellectual history (both theological and philosophical), but political history and theory also have their role to play in this volume. The introduction by Ferguson and McKinley is a superb presentation of what students and scholars should know about Marguerite, as well as, quite judiciously, an assessment of what is not known. This introduction will be a valuable resource for any discussion of Marguerite; as it is beautifully written, it can easily be assigned in advanced undergraduate as well as graduate classes.

As someone who has tried to convey to students what we do and do not know about Marguerite's theological sympathies, I found the balance between Jonathan Reid's piece on her involvement in theological reform and Jean-Marie Le Gall's piece on her Catholicism inspired. Both present compelling arguments supported with ample evidence: Reid's nuanced and complex piece focuses on her ideas and theories as expressed in her writing, while Le Gall's excellent rejoinder examines her practices. Philip Ford's essay on "Neo-Platonic Themes of Ascent" is also compelling, and extremely helpful for guiding discussion of many perplexing passages in Marguerite's work. Isabelle Garnier and Isabell Pantin's discussion of the *Miroir de l'Âme pécheresse* and the *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié* provides an extremely useful history of the first text, from its early editions to its rediscovery, as well as an overview of its structure and a cogent analysis of the function of the mirror in both texts. Reinier Leushuis's luminous analysis of the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* and *La navire* deftly weaves together the intertexts, close readings, and historical context to make a compelling argument for the personal and theological coherence of these two works. The section on Petrarch's *Secretum*, for example, demonstrates keen familiarity with both the critical material and the historical context of this work, thus providing superb grounding for the nuanced analysis of Marguerite's two dialogues. Cynthia Skenazi's subtle reading of the "polyphonic dimension" of *Les Prisons*, balancing "a wide range of philosophical, religious, and literary readings," joins this background seamlessly to a compelling new study of the rhetorical strategies and spiritual complexities of this major work. Jan Miernowski's study of the *Chansons spirituelles* is a definitive piece, placing these poems/songs in the broader context of theories and practices of the time, including publication and performance of *chansons*, concepts of the spirit, and their relationship to the queen's "radical spirituality." This piece is so rich, full of

archival acumen, and carefully argued that it is impossible to do it any justice in a brief summary.

Olivier Millet's study of the biblical and nonbiblical plays is similarly complex and thorough, giving background in the dramaturgy of the period, but also linking a range of ideas between the biblical and nonbiblical material, again demonstrating a coherence in Marguerite's work that is one of the themes of this collection. This theme is taken up again in Ferguson and McKinley's analysis of what would seem to be Marguerite's most secular work, in an essay that should be required reading in any class on Marguerite or on early modern French literature. This essay is in many ways the summa of the collection, returning to ideas, background, and readings that have appeared throughout the volume. This collection as a whole is so complete, so well grounded in the historical and critical materials crucial to understanding Marguerite's works and her beliefs, so beautifully written that it should be in the library of every serious academic institution. My only suggestion for the future would be that, for those of us who also teach Marguerite's works in translation, quotations in French and Latin be translated into English.

KATHLEEN LONG
Cornell University